Memorandum of Interview with Former Lt. Judson E. Ghormley of the Shelby County Sheriff's Department; Federal Office Building, Memphis, Tennessee July 7, 1976

Former Lt. Judson Ghormley of the Shelby County Sheriff's Department was interviewed by team members Folsom and Walker on July 7, 1976. Mr. Ghormley, now employed by the Public Defender's Office, Memphis, Tennessee, stated that in the early part of 1968 he was the commanding officer of one of the city of Memphis "Tactical Units." He said these "Tact" units were composed of officers from the city police, county sheriff's department and state troopers and he thinks they were organized by the city when the sanitation workers began their strike in February of 1968. The "Tact" unit would follow the striking workers marches for the purpose of preventing any type of violence.

On April 4, 1968, Ghormley stated that he was in command of Tactical Unit 10. The unit consisting of three squad cars and 12 officers arrived at Fire station No. 2, located at South Main Street at East Butler, shortly before 6:00 p.m. for the purpose of taking a break. The three cars parked at the north side of the entrance to the fire station so the fire trucks would not be blocked if a fire should occur. Ghormley's car was the lead car and was actually parked on the sidewalk with the front facing the street. The second car was directly behind him and the third car was doubled parked alongside these two cars. Ghormley believes anyone walking south on Main Street would undoubtedly have seen these scout cars and that this, no doubt, caused the individual to drop the bundle containing the rifle at Canipe's Amusement Co.

Ghormley stated that after arrival at the fire station the men began making phone calls to their homes, or getting themselves coffee.

He was in the rest room when someone yelled that King had been shot and the officers began running to the outside. Ghormley said most of the officers were in front of him since he had been in the rest room. They ran out the front entrance and north side entrance of the station, continued between the fire station and the adjacent parking lot, went over the rear retaining wall onto Mulberry Street and into the parking lot of the Lorraine Motel. However, Ghormley went only as far as the retaining wall where he said he observed his men running up the steps of the Lorraine Motel to the balcony where Dr. King had been shot. He said he also observed people on the balcony pointing across Mulberry Street in a northwesterly direction and he saw one of his men scaling the retaining wall on Mulberry Street to get into the back lot of a group of buildings there.

Ghormley stated he then retraced his steps between the fire station and the parking lot back to South Main Street and turned north. He said he has a bad hip and was not running, but was walking fast. He continued north on Main Street to Canipe's Amusement Co. where he observed a bundle which included a Browning rifle box with about a foot of the barrel of a rifle exposed. Ghormley stated that the owner of Canipe's Amusement, Mr. Guy H. Canipe, informed him that a white male had just dropped the bundle in front of his door and had continued south on Main Street. Moments later Ghormley said Canipe told him a white Mustang automobile had left the area at a high rate of speed. Ghormley said he radioed this Information to his dispatcher and guarded the bundle of articles until he was relieved by a police captain.

It was pointed out to Ghormley that there appeared to be some inconsistencies in his prior statement and that it was difficult to reconcile his statements with those of patrolman Vernon Dollahite. It was explained that in his prior statement (FBI Interview of 4/16/68) he said that after hearing that King had been shot he went down East Butler Street to Mulberry Street and then to the area of the Lorraine Motel parking lot and then retraced his steps to South Main and continued north on Main Street to Canipe's Amusement. Ghormley insisted that that statement is in error and that he did not go onto East Butler Street, but proceeded as he has described above.

It was explained that Patrolman Vernon Dollahite had stated that he went over the retaining wall onto Mulberry Street and into the Lorraine Motel parking lot, continued north on Mulberry Street to Huling, then west on Huling to South Main and then south on South Main past Canipe's Amusement Co. It was also explained that Patrolman Dollahite had stated that he was the first officer to reach the bundle of articles and that he had requested another officer to guard the articles. Ghormley said that he would not dispute Dollahite but if he requested someone to guard the articles, they were not there when he got there.